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Guest Editorial – Northwestern Caddisflies

It is a good half century since the world famous Russian trichopterist, Dr. A. B. Martynov, declared that the Trichoptera were an ideal group from the standpoint of obtaining meaningful bio-geographic inferences. Dr. Martynov himself never followed up his historic statement on the Trichoptera, but instead gradually became engrossed in the study of fossil insects. His prophetic remark has, nevertheless, been borne out as group after group of the caddisflies have been studied on a phylogenetic and bio-geographic basis.

As controversies have emerged in recent years concerning the past history of the continental masses, Dr. Martynov's special field of caddisfly study, the biota of the far north, has gradually become of increased importance in contributing information of unusual interest concerning inter-continental dispersals. The northern caddisflies of Europe have been well known for over a century, thanks to the pioneer work of Zetterstedt in Scandinavia and McLachlan in England. These investigators assembled and studied material and information on the northern fauna of their native lands and regions. Early in his career, Martynov himself published many papers making known the characteristics and distribution of the Trichoptera of Russia and especially the fauna of Siberia.

During this time, little was discovered concerning the Trichoptera of northern North America. Barnston and Kennicott made the first extensive northern collections, the former in the area immediately south of Hudson Bay, the latter in north central areas of Canada, including Great Slave Lake. In more recent years, limnological investigators added many valuable collections and lately entomologists have collected many caddisflies in the Government of Canada's massive northern insect survey.

Although taxonomic problems concerning many northern species of Trichoptera have been elucidated by a variety of authors, one facet necessary to achieving a synthesis of the Holarctic caddisfly fauna has been sorely lacking. This is a thorough study of the group for northwestern North America. For several years such a study appeared to be in the offing and was actually prepared by J. Jared Davis. But because of publication difficulties and other obstacles this useful manuscript never graced the printed page.

The study of the Alberta caddisflies presented in this publication is, therefore, a timely and invaluable contribution to our knowledge of the Trichoptera of the far north. It gives us, first, a basis of discriminating identification for all the species of the region for the families treated, and second, geographic and ecological parameters that will be helpful in integrating these species with their relatives in other parts of the northern Holarctic range. The excellent illustrations of Alberta specimens will be of inestimable value in subsequent studies of intra-specific variation and its implications concerning post-Pleistocene coloniza-

tion of deglaciated areas.

In this wise, Dr. Nimmo's study will become a keystone in a synthesis of the evolutionary history of the northern biota.

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